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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to determine whether those who enter teaching remain in the profession or use teaching as a stepping stone to other occupations. The study was conducted at Harris Teachers College in St. Louis, Missouri. The following two groups of graduates were identified for followup: (1) those who received a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1970, and (2) those who received a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1965. The data were collected by examining the personnel records of the St. Louis Public Schools and by direct contact with the graduates, either by telephone or by letter, during the summer of 1975. Data were obtained for 76.8 percent of the graduates. The findings indicated that students who prepare for teaching at Harris Teachers College do enter and remain in the profession. Only 4.9 percent of the 1970 graduating class and 8.8 percent of the 1965 graduating class had left teaching for noneducational employment. It was also shown that more men than women and more whites than blacks were likely to leave the profession. Since the results of this study are based on a sample consisting of two groups of graduates from one institution, they can be regarded as only suggestive, and additional studies are needed to determine their validity. (Several tables are included.) (RC)

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# WHERE THE GRADUATES ARE

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# WHERE THE GRADUATES ARE

## Introduction

A few years ago, a number of studies could be found which addressed the topic of teacher turnover or retention. At that time, it was found that turnover was related to such factors as the size of the school system (Charters, 1956; National Education Association, 1960), salary (National Education Association, 1960), home responsibilities (Charters, 1956), and age (Charters, 1956; Knox, 1968; National Education Association, 1960).

By contrast, the dearth of recent reports on faculty mobility appears to reflect a lack of concern for retention of teachers in the profession, which in turn may be a function of the current teacher surplus, or underutilization of teachers.

In spite of the general apathy concerning teacher retention, however, colleges and universities with teacher preparation programs have the continuing need and responsibility to monitor the effectiveness of their programs by assessing the progress of their graduates. We need to know whether these graduates initially enter the profession for which they have been trained, and if not, why not. We are interested in knowing whether those who enter teaching remain in the profession or use teaching as a stepping stone to other occupations. In short, we want to determine how well our graduates are able to function after commencement.

Design

This study was conducted at Harris Teachers College, a school which has been engaged in teacher preparation for more than a century. The college is located in the inner city of St. Louis, and is unique in that it is the only teacher education institution in the nation which is operated as part of a public school system. A large proportion of the college's graduates go directly into teaching in the St. Louis area; thus the potential impact of the institution on the total educational community is almost unlimited. A follow-up of the graduates provides invaluable information concerning that impact.

The study identified two groups of graduates to follow up: those who were graduated five years ago and those who were graduated ten years ago. The first group included all persons who were awarded the Bachelor of Arts in Education in June, 1970 (N = 133); and the second group was comprised of those individuals who were awarded the Bachelor of Arts in Education in June, 1965 (N = 57). The data were collected in two ways: by examining the personnel records of the St. Louis Public Schools, and by direct contact with the graduates, either by telephone or by letter, during the summer of 1975.

Results

Table 1 presents information on the current status of the 1970 graduating class, by sex and race. Of the 133 graduates, data were obtained for 102, or 76.8 percent. In addition, an examination of personnel records for the St. Louis Public Schools showed that five of the 31 from whom no current information was available taught in the city schools for three or more years before leaving the area. Since most of the non-respondents are women (25/31), it is likely that changes of name and/or residence account in large measure for our failure to obtain a response from them.

As shown in Table 1, more than two-thirds of the 1970 graduates are still teaching in 1975. (Included in this category are three substitute teachers, 87 regular teachers, one guidance counselor, and one director of program planning for the school system.) This evidence would seem to indicate a higher degree of retention for a longer period than has been reported by many other studies.

TABLE 1

Present Status of June 1970 Graduates by Sex and Race
(N = 133)

| Sex and Race | Present Status | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Teaching or Related Educational Positions | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | St. Louis Public Schools | | + | Other than St. Louis Public Schools | | = | | | Non-Educational Employment | | Not Seeking Employment | | Attending School | | No Response | | Totals |
| Male | No. | % | | No. | % | | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Black | 8 | 6.0 | + | 1 | 0.8 | = | 9 | 6.8 | 3 | 2.3 | - | | - | | 1 | 0.8 | 13 |
| White | 9 | 6.8 | + | 5 | 3.8 | = | 14 | 10.5 | 3 | 2.3 | - | | - | | 5 | 3.8 | 22 |
| Total Males | 17 | 12.8 | + | 6 | 4.5 | = | 23 | 17.3 | 6 | 4.5 | - | | - | | 6 | 4.5 | 35 |
| Female | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | 37 | 27.8 | + | 3 | 2.3 | = | 40 | 30.1 | - | | 1 | 0.8 | 1 | 0.8 | 11 | 8.3 | 53 |
| White | 22 | 16.5 | + | 7 | 5.3 | = | 29 | 21.8 | - | | 2 | 1.5 | - | | 14 | 10.5 | 45 |
| Total Females | 59 | 44.4 | + | 10 | 7.5 | = | 69 | 51.9 | - | | 3 | 2.3 | 1 | 0.8 | 25 | 18.8 | 98 |
| TOTALS | 76 | 57.1 | + | 16 | 12.0 | = | 92 | 69.2 | 6 | 4.5 | 3 | 2.3 | 1 | 0.8 | 31 | 23.3 | 133 |
| Totals as a Function of Respondents Only | 76 | 74.5 | + | 16 | 15.7 | = | 92 | 90.2 | 6 | 5.9 | 3 | 2.9 | 1 | 1.0 | - | | 102 |

NOTE: Slight discrepancy in %'s due to rounding.

But does the retention rate reported in Table 1 remain stable? Do teachers in a metropolitan area tend to leave the profession after five years? Table 2 sets forth the report of current status for graduates of June, 1965, by sex and race. For this group of 57 persons, data were available for 45, or 79 percent. Of the 12 not responding, two taught in the St. Louis Public Schools for three or more years. Again, the greater proportion of non-respondents are women (9/12).

Table 2 shows 35 persons, or 61.4 percent, persisting in the profession after 10 years. Among these are two substitute teachers, 27 regular teachers, three principals, one art consultant, one director of media, and one reading clinic director. In addition, two members of this class are now retired from teaching by reason of age.

TABLE 2

Present Status of June 1965 Graduates by Sex and Race
(N = 57)

| Sex and Race | Present Status: Teaching or Related Educational Positions — St. Louis Public Schools | | | Other than St. Louis Public Schools | | | | Non-Educational Employment | | Not Seeking Employment | | Attending School | | No Response | | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | % | + | No. | % | = | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | No. | % | |
| Male | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | 2 | 3.5 | + | - | | = | 2 | 3.5 | 1 | 1.8 | - | | 1 | 1.8 | - | | 4 |
| White | 4 | 7.0 | + | 3 | 5.3 | = | 7 | 12.3 | 3 | 5.3 | - | | - | | 3 | 5.3 | 13 |
| Spanish-Amer. | 1 | 1.8 | + | - | | = | 1 | 1.8 | - | | - | | - | | - | | 1 |
| Total Males | 7 | 12.3 | + | 3 | 5.3 | = | 10 | 17.5 | 4 | 7.0 | - | | 1 | 1.8 | 3 | 5.3 | 18 |
| Female | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Black | 13 | 22.8 | + | 1 | 1.8 | = | 14 | 24.6 | - | | 2 | 3.5 | - | | 2 | 3.5 | 18 |
| White | 4 | 7.0 | + | 7 | 12.3 | = | 11 | 19.3 | 1 | 1.8 | 1 | 1.8 | 1 | 1.8 | 7 | 12.3 | 21 |
| Total Females | 17 | 29.8 | + | 8 | 14.1 | = | 25 | 43.9 | 1 | 1.8 | 3 | 5.3 | 1 | 1.8 | 9 | 15.8 | 39 |
| TOTALS | 24 | 42.1 | + | 11 | 19.3 | = | 35 | 61.4 | 5 | 8.8 | 3 | 5.3 | 2 | 3.5 | 12 | 21.1 | 57 |
| Totals as a Function of Respondents Only | 24 | 53.3 | + | 11 | 24.4 | = | 35 | 77.8 | 5 | 11.1 | 3 | 6.7 | 2 | 4.4 | - | | 45 |

NOTE: Slight discrepancy in %'s due to rounding.

Tables 3 and 4 show the number and percent of persons persisting in teaching, by sex and by race, respectively. It will be noted that women are more likely than men to persist in teaching, and that blacks persist more than whites.

TABLE 3

Number and Percent of Graduates Still in Teaching, by Sex

| | 1970 | | 1965 | | Totals | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Males | 23/35 | 65.7 | 10/18 | 56.0 | 33/53 | 62.3 |
| Females | 69/98 | 70.4 | 25/39 | 64.1 | 94/137 | 68.6 |

TABLE 4

Number and Percent of Graduates Still in Teaching, by Race

| | 1970 | | 1965 | | Totals | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Number | Percent |
| Black | 49/66 | 74.2 | 16/22 | 72.7 | 65/88 | 73.9 |
| White | 43/67 | 64.2 | 18/34 | 52.9 | 61/101 | 60.4 |

Summary and Comments

The findings of this study indicate that students who prepare for teaching at Harris Teachers College do in fact enter and remain in the profession. Only 4.5 percent of the 1970 graduating class and 8.8 percent of the 1965 graduating class have left teaching to accept non-educational employment during the five or ten year period since they entered the profession.

As earlier studies have also found, women were more likely than men to remain in teaching. Among those persisting in education, men more often became administrators than did women, while women in this study were more likely than men to be found teaching in school systems other than St. Louis. When analyzed by race, blacks were more likely to remain in teaching than whites.

When we compare these two groups of graduates, two predictable differences emerge: 1) a greater percentage of the 1965 graduates have moved from the classroom to other educational positions with broader responsibilities; and 2) more of the teachers persisting for ten years have made geographic moves. Of the 1965 graduates, one is teaching overseas, two are teaching out-of-state, and eight are located in suburban school systems bordering St. Louis.

Many of the extant studies on teacher turnover have been conducted by state departments of education who were interested in finding out what percent of their teachers left teaching in their particular state. In 1960, the National Education Association reported that "the annual rate of loss to a state, i.e. the number who leave teaching in the state during a year as a percent of the total number of teachers, ranges from 5 percent to 17 percent in the state studies available." (NEA, 1960, page 2). In the present study, if we ask instead what percent of teachers remain in the St. Louis metropolitan area, we find that for the 1970 graduates, 91 of the 92 reported still in teaching are also still in the St. Louis area. For the 1965 graduates, 32 of the 35 persisting in teaching are still in the St. Louis community. In other words, 68.4 percent and 57.9 percent respectively of the 1970 and 1965 graduating classes are still teaching in St. Louis or the surrounding suburbs. The pro-rated annual attrition rate therefore would be just over six percent for the 1970 graduates, and just over four percent for the 1965 graduates. Harris graduates compare very favorable with these reports, and doubtless would compare even more favorably if the referenced state studies had identified specific urban areas within the states for study. In one of the more current studies (Keeler, 1973) the author stated that the overall termination rate of teachers had varied from 6 to 11 percent for the period from 1955 to 1970. Clearly, the teachers in the present study have a much better record of professional stability than those reported in other available studies.

The results of this study are based on a sample consisting of two groups of graduates from one institution, and thus can be regarded only as suggestive. The findings, however, would seem to indicate that graduates of at least one urban college of education are not only able and willing to assume their professional responsibilities initially, but do persist in teaching long enough to enable them to make significant contributions to their profession and to the total community. In order to determine whether these results are operative only for graduates of Harris Teachers College, are generalizable to graduates of other urban teacher preparation institutions, or whether they reflect an emerging trend toward greater teacher retention, additional studies will be needed. These studies should assess persistence among teachers in various settings, prepared by various types of institutions.

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